

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY MBABANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9102

INFO AMEMBASSY GABORONE

C O N F I D E N T I A L MBABANE 0153

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MILI, PFOR, XA, WZ

SUBJECT: REGIONAL ARMS RESTRAINTS STUDY

REF: STATE 20621, MBABANE A-001, MBABANE 0145, GABORONE 0166

1. AS PRECEIVED BY THE GOS, THE MAJOR THRUST TO ITS SECURITY IF FROM MOZAMBIQUE. THE RADICAL RHETORIC USED BY MACHEL AND GPRM ADVENTURISM IN ANGOLA HAVE CLEARLY DISTURBED THE CONSERVATIVE SWAZI RULING ELITE AND THEY ARE WORRIED ABOUT GPRM INTENTIONS TOWARDS SWAZILAND. THE SWAZI ARMY (THE UMBUTFO OR SWAZILAND ROYAL DEFENSE FORCE), WHICH WAS CREATED LESS THAN THREE YEARS AGO, IS SEEN AT LEAST PARTLY AS A POTENTIAL BLOCKING FORCE AGAINST THIS THREAT. AT PRESENT, THE ARMY CONSISTS OF ABOUT 1500 POORLY TRAINED MEN EQUIPPED WITH RIFLES, MACHINE GUNS AND A FEW MORTARS, REPORTEDLY ACQUIRED FROM SOUTH AFRICA. HOWEVER, IN MAY,

1975 THE GOS ASKED THE UK TO SUPPLY THEM WITH MODERN WEAPONS, INCLUDING ANTI-AIRCRAFT MISSILES, FIGHTER AIRCRAFT AND AIMORED VEHICLES (MBABANE 825, MAY 19, 1975). THE BRITISH STALLED BY SENDING A SENIOR ARMY OFFICER TO STUDY THE SWAZI ARMY AND THE EARLIER REQUEST HAS NOT BEEN PUSHED. GOS MAY HAVE REALIKED THAT SUCH SOPHISTICATED WEAPONS ARE FRIGHTFULLY EXPENSIVE AND THAT IT DOES NOT HAVE THE CAPABILITY TO USE AND MAINTAIN THEM. HOWEVER, IF ARMS WERE FREE AND INCLUDED OFFER OF TRAINING IN USE AND
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MAINTENANCE, GOS MIGHT BE TEMPTED.

2. A U.S. SECURITY GUARANTEE MIGHT REASSURE THE SWAZIS BUT IS PROBABLY NOT FEASIBLE; GOS WOULD NOT WISH TO ANTAGONIZE GPRM AND OTHER LEFT-WING OAU STATES AND RISK ITS NON-ALIGNED STATUS BY APPEARING TO ENTER INTO AN ALLIANCE WITH THE U.S. FURTHERMORE, THE THREAT TO SWAZILAND FROM MOZAMBIQUE IS MORE FROM INFILTRATION AND SUBVERSION THAN FROM A FRONTAL ASSULT WHICH WOULD ALMOST CERTAINLY BE OPPOSED BY SOUTH AFRICA. SWAZILAND IS A TINY COUNTRY BETWEEN TWO GIANTS AND KNOWS THAT IT CANNOT HOPE TO MATCH THEM MILITARILY.

3. KING SOBHUZA HAS EMPHASIZED THAT SWAZI ARMY ALSO HAS A DOMESTIC ROLE TO PLAY BY DEVELOPING A SENSE OF PATRIOTISM AND NATIONALISM IN THE YOUTH OF THE COUNTRY AND ASSISTING IN PEACEFUL ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT. THE GOS IS AWARE THAT ITS REAL SECURITY LIES IN PROVIDING A BETTER LIFE FOR ITS PEOPLE SO THAT THEY WILL NOT BE TEMPTED BY MORE RADICAL PATHS BEING FOLLOWED ELSEWHERE IN AFRICA. THE MOST POSITIVE ROLE USG COULD PLAY IN PERSUADING GOS TO EXERCISE RESTRAINT IN PURCHASE OF SOPHISTICATED WEAPONS IS TO CONTINUE AND INCREASE OUR COOPERATION WITH SWAZIS IN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS WHICH MIGHT INCLUDE A CIVIL ACTION TYPE ROLE FOR THE ARMY.

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